

Modern town hall - Dialogue between modernity and tradition

Agnieszka Adamska (PhD candidate) Wroclaw University of Technology Faculty of Architecture

Dialogue between modernity and tradition is perfectly visible on the example of a town hall. The town hall is a representative public building, which is often having a tower. Formerly was the seat of government. The history of the town hall dates back to ancient times, but in its current form it began to appear in the twelfth century. Localizing town hall in the city center, scale and monumentality testified to the power and prestige of the city. Over time the town hall held various positions in the life of the city. First and foremost was the seat of local government, but also had a torture chamber and prison. It was a place bustling with life, full of people. According to tradition, in the basement there was a tavern. Town hall with market square was very prestigious place. That's why around the town hall there were situated the most expensive stalls.

The modern town hall is not only the representative seat of government, but also a symbol of the city. It's not just a settlement of administrative matters. Its importance is manifested in various areas: administration, culture, education and entertainment. This space constitutes the central point of life in where people integrate and inspire. The town hall is the most important secular building in the city. Place should be encouraging to visit, so that people want to spend time there.

Formerly, when the town hall was the seat of power, there was a natural need of arriving residents to the city. Currently, town halls performing only representative functions lose their importance and its necessary to find them new usages. For this reason, today's town halls contain more new features like restaurants, concert halls, museums, libraries, meeting places or spaces for work. Today's town halls are designed in view of the current needs of XXI century users. The building, which is the pride and proof of the tradition of the town should satisfy the expectations of users, visitors and employees.

The subject of my Master Thesis is adaptation of a commercial office building to the Town Hall of Szydlów. The idea is to move existent Municipal Office of Szydlów to adapted building, which is located in the middle of market square. However, it's disused and degraded at the moment and requires renovation. This special location needs respect to intimate character of market square, historical urban layout and local building traditions. The new Town Hall is modern, functional and suits to medieval character surrounding. The idea is to create representative, multifunctional, safe space, attractive for different age users. Main, administrative function is enriched by adding exhibition area, cafe, lookout tower and library. Project includes rebuilding existing object and master plan of market square of Szydlów. The Master Thesis is an attempt to rescue dilapidated building. Technical condition of the building is right, so demolition would have been an error. Difficulty of the project was to locate modern needs into existent walls. The new Town Hall is adapted to XXI century requirements by adding modern accents. New building is entirely adapted for disabled people. In conclusion, degraded building is rescued. Szydlów obtained new, attractive market square with Town Hall, which beyond administrative function is a tourist attraction and a meeting place. Existent structure provides many design capabilities what I attempted to show in my Master Thesis.

The town hall of the XXI century should be modern and functional, referring to the neighboring historic buildings at the same time. It must be created with thought of residents of Szydlów. The building should not only fit into the environment and complement its medieval character, but it must be functional and provide users a sense of security and comfort. During the International Conference Arquitectonics: Mind, Land & Society I would like to share my thoughts about adapting the buildings to the town hall, exemplified on the Town Hall of Szydlów.